We claim:

1. A method of reducing power consumption by an electronic shelf label (ESL) comprising a receiver for receiving messages, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) determining a time period when messages are not transmitted to the ESL;

(b) transmitting at least one message to the ESL instructing the ESL to enter a reduced power consumption mode by turning off at least a portion of the receiver during the time period;

(c) turning off at least a portion of the receiver by the ESL at the beginning of the time period to enter the reduced power consumption mode; and

(d) turning on the portion of the receiver by the ESL at the end of the time period to resume normal operation.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the message includes a start time for the reduced power consumption mode.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the message includes an end time for the reduced power consumption mode.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein the message includes a duration for the reduced power consumption mode.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the message is transmitted to plurality of additional ESLs instructing the plurality of ESLs to each enter the reduced power consumption mode by turning off at least a portion of each ESL's receiver during the time period.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the ESL is disposed in a retail establishment and the time period corresponds generally to when the retail establishment is closed.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the ESL is disposed in a retail establishment and the time period corresponds generally to when the retail establishment is open.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the time period corresponds to a time period when no ESL activity is planned.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) comprises the following sub-step:

ceasing to monitor for received messages.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising, after step (c), the following step:

depressing a button to end the reduced power consumption mode.

11. An electronic shelf label (ESL) system comprising:

an ESL comprising a display displaying informational text and a receiver for receiving messages; and

a host computer transmitting a message to the ESL instructing the ESL to enter a reduced power consumption mode by turning off at least a portion of the receiver during a time period when messages are not transmitted to the ESL;

said ESL receiving the message and turning off at least a portion of the ESL's receiver during the time period to enter reduced power consumption mode, said ESL turning on the portion of the receiver at the end of the time period to resume normal operation.

12. The ESL system of claim 11 wherein the message includes a start time for the reduced power consumption mode.

13. The ESL system of claim 12 wherein the message includes an end time for the reduced power consumption mode.

14. The ESL system of claim 12 wherein the message includes a duration for the reduced power consumption mode.

15. The ESL system of claim 11 further comprising an additional plurality of ESLs, wherein the message is transmitted to the plurality of ESLs instructing the plurality of ESLs to

each enter the reduced power consumption mode by turning off at least a portion of each ESL's receiver during the time period.

16. The ESL system of claim 11 wherein the ESL is disposed in a retail establishment and the time period corresponds generally to when the retail establishment is closed.

17. The ESL system of claim 11 wherein the ESL is disposed in a retail establishment and the time period corresponds generally to when the retail establishment is open.

18. The ESL system of claim 11 wherein the ESL ceases to monitor for received messages during the reduced power consumption mode.

19. The ESL system of claim 11 wherein the ESL further comprises a button ending the reduced power consumption mode when depressed.